

LT205 – Theory and Literature – Theories of World Literature

Seminar Leader: Prof. Dr. Laura Scuriatti

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

What are the features of works of literature which can be read across national and cultural boundaries? The idea of world literature has been at the centre of literary theory since its inception: in its long history, the concept has undergone many complicated metamorphoses, which also depended on the ethical and political implications of the expansion of the literary market. But what makes a literary work a work of world literature? What notions of literature, what kinds of readings and critical strategies does this definition imply? What are the connections between the idea of world literature, the success of specific literary forms - between specific versions of the notion of “universal” and the impact of post- and de-colonial movements? Do works of world literature necessarily imply their ability to “translate” across cultures and languages? Students will explore these questions and reflect on the emergence of literary “masterpieces” in the literary field and in the global literary market.

The course is divided in two main sections: the first section is dedicated to theories of world literature, with readings by Chinua Achebe, Eric Auerbach, Emily Apter, Pascale Casanova, Pheng Cheah, David Damrosch, Theo D’Haen, Franco Moretti, Gayatri Spivak, Rabindranath Tagore, among others. In the second section students will engage with case studies – specifically, the introductions to a number of anthologies of world literature: in this part of the course the students will actively present the problems in each of the introductions, and choose a literary text in the corresponding anthologies. Each student will work on the chosen literary text and make a case for its presence in the anthology, on the basis of the anthology’s introduction, and of the texts and theories read in the first section of the class.

The course will also benefit from the presence of three distinguished guests: Prof. Annalisa Volpone, University of Perugia, who will present the case of Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* as a work of world literature; Pierdomenico Baccalario, CEO of Book on a Tree Publishing Services, who will talk about the challenge of producing and translating children’s and young adult literature for the global market; and Dr. Francesco Giusti, Lecturer in Italian Studies at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, who will give a talk about world literature and poetry.

Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared, to participate actively, and to bring the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

Please note that in seminars we will work on printed texts: NO COMPUTERS OR TABLETS allowed in class. Texts which are made available in digital format should be printed for use in class.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences per semester from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Lateness is disrupting and disrespectful. Arriving late to class will be considered equivalent to an absence if it is a regular occurrence (i.e. if it happens more than 3 times over the semester).

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Remote access to class is not offered in this course.

Use of Electronic Devices

To facilitate a focused and engaging seminar discussion the use of electronic devices during class time is not allowed, unless for disability accommodation. If you have a disability accommodation, please inform your instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on the basis of their participation, the quality of their contribution to class discussion, and on the quality of their submitted assignments. Lateness and absences will impact negatively on the participation grade.

Assignments

Assignments for this course consist in:

- 1 in-class exam: Thursday, October 15 (circa 1500 words)
- 1 presentation on chosen assigned texts: max 20 minutes. Students should submit their presentation notes after delivering the presentation (circa 1500 words).
- 1 final essay (circa 3000 words). Deadline: Friday, December 4, 23:59 hrs

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Should a student be sick during the exam day or on the day of their scheduled presentations, it will be possible to schedule an alternative date for the missed assignment. Students who are sick on the day of the exam or of the presentation should present a medical certificate issued on that day.

An unexcused absence on the day of the assigned presentation or exam will result in a F for that assignment.

Assignments Deadlines:

Thursday, October 15: IN-CLASS EXAM

Friday, December 4, 23:59 hrs: FINAL ESSAY

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Participation: 30%

Midterm exam: 30%

Presentation: 20%

Final essay: 20%

Schedule

THE IDEA OF WORLD LITERATURE – AND ITS DISCONTENT

Week 1 – Goethe and Marx

Tuesday, September 1

J. P. Eckermann, *Conversations of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe with Johann Peter Eckermann* (1836; excerpts).

John Pizer, “Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Origins and Relevance of *Weltliteratur*”, in Theo D’haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (eds), *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (London: Routledge, 2023), 3-10.

Thursday, September 3

K. Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

A. Ahmad, ‘The Communist Manifesto and “World Literature”’, *Social Scientist*, 28.7/8 (2000), 3–30.

Week 2 – Auerbach and Moretti

Tuesday, September 8

E. Auerbach, ‘Philology and *Weltliteratur*’, M. Said and E. Said (trans.), *The Centennial Review*, 13.1 (1969), 1–17.

Amir A. Mufti, “Eric Auerbach and the Death and Life of World Literature”, in Theo D’haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (eds), *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (London: Routledge, 2023), 36-44.

Thursday, September 10

F. Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature and More Conjectures” (2000/2003), in *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. by Theo D’haen, César Domínguez, Mads Thomsen (London: Routledge, 2013), 160-175.

E. Kristal, “Considering Coldly . . .”: A Response to Franco Moretti’, *New Left Review*, 15 (2002), 61–74.

Week 3 – Tagore

Tuesday, September 15:

R. Tagore, “Bengali National Literature,” and “Literature,” in S. Chaudhuri and S.K. Das (eds.) and S. Chakravorty (trans.) *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Writings on Literature and Language* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

B. Tiwari, “Rabindranath Tagore’s Comparative World Literature”, in Theo D’haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (eds), *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (London: Routledge, 2023), 29-35.

Thursday, September 17:

L. Burns, “World Literature and the Problem of Postcolonialism: Aesthetics and Dissent”, in *The*

Work of World Literature, ed. by Francesco Giusti and Benjamin Lewis Robinson (Berlin: ICI Berlin Press, 2021), 57–74, https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-19_03

Week 4 - Problems

Tuesday, September 22:

E. Apter, “Against World Literature” (2013), in *World Literature in Theory*, ed. by David Damrosch (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 345-362

M. Puchner, “The Two Faces of World Literature”, in M. Puchner, *Literature for a Changing Planet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022, 52-72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1t8q8zr.6>

WORLD LITERATURE: WORLDS, NATIONS, THE GLOBAL, THE PLANETARY

Thursday, September 24:

D. Damrosch, “World Literature, World History”, in M. Hawas (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to World Literature and World History* (London: Routledge, 2018), 3-13.

T. Brennan, ‘The National Longing for Form’, in H. K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 44–70.

Week 5

Tuesday, September 29:

T. D’haen, “Roots, Roads and Maps (of) Literature”, in M. Hawas (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to World Literature and World History* (London: Routledge, 2018), 146-158.

P. Cheah, *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Duke University Press, 2016) (excerpts).

Thursday, October 1:

F. Jameson, ‘Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism’, *Social Text*, 15 (1986), 65–88.

Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015) (excerpts).

Week 6

Tuesday, October 6:

C. Achebe, ‘Africa and Her Writers’, in *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) (excerpts).

Thursday, October 8:

G. Chakravorty Spivak, “Planetary” (2003), in *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. by Theo D’haen, César Domínguez, Mads Thomsen (London: Routledge, 2013), 207-217.

D. Damrosch and G. Chakravorty Spivak, “Comparative Literature/World Literature: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and David Damrosch.” *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2011): 455–85.

Week 7

Tuesday, October 13:

P. Casanova, “Literature as a World” (2005), in *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. by Theo D’haen, César Domínguez, Mads Thomsen (London: Routledge, 2013), 275-288.

E. Hayot, “On Literary Worlds”, *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 72, No. 2 (2011): 129-161.

Thursday, October 15: IN-CLASS EXAM

FALL BREAK (October 19-25)

Week 8

Tuesday, October 27:

I. Wallerstein, "World-Systems Analysis as a Knowledge Movement," in *The Routledge Handbook of World-Systems Analysis*, edited by Christopher Chase-Dunn and Salvatore Babones (London: Routledge, 2012)

Thursday, October 29:

S. Helgesson and P. Vermeulen, 'World Literature in the Making', in S. Helgesson and P. Vermeulen (eds.), *Institutions of World Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2015) (excerpts).

TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATABILITY

Week 9

Tuesday, November 3:

E. Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) (excerpts).

Thursday, November 5:

E. Apter, *Against World Literature. On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013) (excerpts).

Week 10

Tuesday, November 10:

R. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) (excerpts)

Thursday, November 12:

P. Giles, "World Literature and Global English", in Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (London: Routledge, 2023), 388-397.

CASE STUDIES – ANTHOLOGIES OF WORLD LITERATURE

Week 11

Tuesday, November 17:

S. Lawall, 'Anthologising "World Literature"', in T. D'haen, C. Dominguez, and M. R. Thomsen (eds.), *World Literature: A Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012)

Thursday, November 19:

M. Mack (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, expanded edn. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).

Week 12 – SPECIAL WEEK: PROF. ANNALISA VOLPONE, UNIVERSITY OF PERUGIA

JOYCE'S *FINNEGANS WAKE* AS A CASE STUDY FOR WORLD LITERATURE

Tuesday, November 24 and November 26:

Readings TBD

Week 13

Tuesday, December 1:

M. Caws and C. Prendergast (eds.), *The HarperCollins World Reader* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

Thursday, December 3:

P. Davis et al. (eds.), *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature* (Boston: Bedford/St Martin's, 2004).

D. Damrosch and D. Pike (eds.), *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Pearson/Longman, 2009).

FINAL ESSAY DEADLINE: FRIDAY DECEMBER 4, 23:59 hrs

Week 14

Tuesday, December 8: TBC: GUEST SPEAKER: PIERDOMENICO BACCALARIO (CEO, Book on a Tree Publishing Services): Producing Children's/Young Adult Literature for the Global Market

Thursday, December 10: TBC: GUEST SPEAKER: DR. FRANCESCO GIUSTI, Lecturer in Italian Studies, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main: Poetry and World Literature

COMPLETION WEEK

Tuesday 15 December and Thursday 17 December

Library and Book Purchase Policies

All texts will be available in digital format or as a printed reader. Extra texts will be available on the reserve shelf in the library.